

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

No. I.—Note on the Malay Sambar (*Cervus unicolor equinus*.)

In Vol. I. page 117 of this Journal I described a fine head from Lampang in Northern Siam.

The following are my measurements of a better head in the possession of Mr. W. G. Peiniger :—

Length, Left $37\frac{1}{2}$, Right 37; Circumferences, above coronet 9 inches, above brow tine 7 inches. The greatest outside spread is 31 inches. Mr. Peiniger informs me that he picked up this head, together with four others, in the Me Teun river, Me Ping, Western Siam, some years ago, and that all had been recently killed by wild dogs within a comparatively small area, a striking illustration of the damage done by these red of hunting dogs.

Kemp (Vol. I, p. 51 of this Journal) has alluded to the Sambar's fondness for the fruit of the Makawk tree. One frequently sees small heaps containing 10 to 20 well cleaned Makawk stones (which are the size of a pigeon's egg) far removed from any Makawk tree, and most frequently seen on ridges near, but removed from, Sambar's excrement. The Sambar apparently swallows the fruits whole and ejects the stones later on when ruminating; though at the moment I cannot call to mind any other ruminant which swallows large indigestible stones, though many jungle denizens, Civets for example, pass fruit stones through the body.

The bark of the Makawk tree (*Spondias mangifera*) is astringent like the fruit, though no animals touch the bark.

K. G. GAIRDNER.

Jan. 15 1922.

No. II.—Intelligence of Otters.

While travelling down the Chumphon river some years ago not many miles from the sea, I encountered a pack of otters. There were ten or twelve of them, and they were moving along at the water's edge, playing about and evidently in search of food. The tide at the time was low, and there was a large expanse of mud between the river and the proper bank. I was loth to shoot one of them for I have kept otters in captivity, and know what fascinating pets they are; but a specimen was badly wanted as very little is known about the distribution of otters in Siam. To judge by their size they were the larger form, *Lutra* species, and not the small clawless one, *Aonyx cinerea*.

I fired at one of the biggest animals but only managed to wound it, and it went up towards the bank evidently to get under

cover of the jungle there. The second shot fared no better except to turn the animal back again towards the water. The rest of the pack were quite unconcerned by the noise, but stopped and stared at us, raising themselves and standing up on their hind legs to get a better view of us.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. The whole pack suddenly surrounded their wounded comrade, and uttering loud cries, four or five of them seized it, and partly lifting, partly dragging, conveyed it over to the bank and disappeared into the jungle beyond. The soft mud at this spot, a broad stretch of 15 to 20 yards, made it impossible to follow them and see what happened afterwards.

MALCOLM SMITH.

Jan. 1922.

No. III.—The Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) in Siam.

On March 5th last, I received a specimen of the large bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) shot by Major Forty at Preng, near Petriu. It appears to be the fourth record of this bird in this part of the world, the other three being from Raheng, Malacca and Singapore respectively (*vide* this Journal, v, p. 81.). The bittern is well known throughout Europe, though nowhere common. In winter it migrates to the Mediterranean, S. W. Asia, India, Burma and China. It is likely that it is more common in Siam than it is thought to be, but it is a shy bird, hiding away during the day time in swampy places among tall reeds, and is thus seldom seen. Major Forty's bird was an old male and very fat, and was excellent eating. The skin is now in my collection.

C. J. AAGAARD.

April, 1922.

No. IV.—The Burmese House Crow (*Corvus splendens insolens*)

Having in mind Gyldenstolpe's statement that this Crow was common in Bangkok, whereas during the past 16 years I have only seen it once in Petchaburi town, I took particular note when coming across from Moulmein to Raheng early this year, as to how far this dreadful bird extended towards Siam. In Moulmein it is of course the commonest and noisiest vertebrate the place supports, and successfully competes for the "chota hazri" laid on the verandah, unless one instantly dashes from bed to table.

It seems to be a maritime or lowland bird, and was entirely absent a few miles East of Kawkarik where the ascent of the Dawna mountains commences, some 40 miles East of Moulmein, being replaced by the ordinary jungle crow.

K. G. GAIRDNER.

March, 1922.